

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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SUBJ: ELECTIONS: ONE MONTH TO GO

REF: LIMA 3681

SUMMARY: WITH ONE MONTH TO GO BEFORE ELECTIONS, THE POLITICAL SCENE IN PERU IS CHARACTERIZED BY POSTURING ON THE PART OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE GOVERNMENT AND CONSIDERABLE APATHY AMONG THE GENERAL POPULACE. RUMORS CIRCULATE THAT APRA WILL WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE AT THE LAST MINUTE (DENIED BY APRA LEADERS), BEDOYA REYES' PPC CONTINUES TO QUESTION THE GOP'S COMPETENCE AND COMMITMENT TO A FREE POLITICAL PROCESS, AND MORALES BERMUDEZ AND PRIME MINISTER MOLINA HAVE PUBLICLY REAFFIRMED THEIR DEDICATION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ELECTORAL TIMETABLE. AP IS DEBATING THE DISPOSITION OF THE AP VOTE. LEFTIST PARTIES ARE ACTIVE BUT DIVISIONS AMONG "RADICAL" AND "CONSERVATIVE" MARXISTS CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL INTEREST THE PAST WEEK CENTERED ON THE RUMORED WITHDRAWAL OF APRA FROM THE JUNE 4 RACE, AND THE CONTINUING
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ARGUMENTS WITHIN ACCION POPULAR (AP) RANKS OVER AP'S VOTE. DESPITE A LOCAL PERIODICAL'S CLAIM THAT APRA'S RECENT OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE ALLEGING A GOP "INTENTION OF FRAUD" WAS PAVING THE WAY FOR AN APRA WITHDRAWAL, INFORMED APRA LEADERS EMPHATICALLY DISCLAIMED ANY INTEREST TO PULL OUT OF THE JUNE 4 ELECTIONS. APRA'S HAYA DE LA TORRE AND OTHER APRA LEADERS CONTINUED THEIR CAMPAIGN APPEARANCES WITH GENERALLY GOOD TURNOUTS.

2. WITH FORMER PRESIDENT BELAUNDE'S RETURN TO LIMA APRIL 29, AP LEADERS REPORTEDLY WILL DECIDE SOON WHETHER TO SUPPORT ONE OF THE PARTIES STILL IN THE CAMPAIGN (APRA OR BEDOYA REYES' POPULAR CHRISTIAN PARTY --PPC), TO URGE A BLANK VOTE, OR TO LEAVE THIS DECISION UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL AP VOTER. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT THIS QUESTION WILL BE DECIDED IN A NATIONAL MEETING MAY 13.

3. IN THE MIDST OF RUMORS OF APRA'S WITHDRAWAL, CONDEMNATION BY ALL POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE GOP'S DENIAL OF FREE RADIO-TV TIME TO TWO ULTRA-LEFT GROUPS (UDP AND FOCEP) AND SHARP CRITICISM OF DISCRIMINATION FROM "GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED" MEDIA BY BEDOYA REYES' PPC, GOP PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ AND PM OSCAR MOLINA PALLOCCHIA STRONGLY EMPHASIZED THE ARMED FORCES' INTENTION TO CARRY OUT ON SCHEDULE A CONSTITUTIONAL TRANSFER OF POWER. IN WIDELY PUBLICIZED SPEECHES MAY 2, BOTH MORALES BERMUDEZ AND MOLINA DEFENDED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE "ARMED FORCES REVOLUTION" AND ITS DETERMINATION TO HAND OVER POWER TO A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. MOLINA REJECTED SUGGESTIONS OF ANY GOP INTENT TO USE FRAUD OR TO THWART THE POPULAR WILL. HE WARNED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TURN OVER POWER IN AN ORDERLY WAY AND ON THE BASIS OF A POPULAR VOTE, NOT IN RESPONSE TO DEMANDS OF "DELIRIOUS PAMPHLETEERS" CALLING FOR A "POPULAR UPRISING." MOLINA SEEMED TO IMPLY THAT THE GOP WILL STICK TO ITS TIMETABLE WITH NO TURNOVER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF GOVERNMENT UNTIL 1980.

4. BEDOYA REYES' PPC MAY 3 EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE OFFICIAL GOP DECLARATIONS OF "ABSOLUTE RESPECT FOR THE POPULAR WILL" (PPC'S PHRASE). HOWEVER, THE PPC DECLARATION THEN WENT ON TO CRITICIZE GOP'S DENIAL OF RADIO AND TV TIME TO UDP AND FOCEP, AND TO PROTEST STRONGLY AGAINST "DISCRIMINATION" BY THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MEDIA. THE PPC STATEMENT ALSO WARNED THAT BEFORE ELIMINATING SUBSIDIES ON MILK, FLOUR AND COOKING OIL OVERNIGHT, THE GOP SHOULD EXPLAIN TO VOTERS WHAT ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC EXPENSES MIGHT BE REDUCED. THE COMMUNIQUE WAS CLEARLY AIMED AT ESTABLISHING PPC POLITICAL POSITIONS AND WAS LESS DIRECTLY CHALLENGING THAN HAYA DE LA TORRE'S CONTINUING ALLEGATIONS OF A GOP WILL TO CARRY OUT FRAUDULENT PRACTICES.

5. ALTHOUGH POLITICIANS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE INTENSELY PREOCCUPIED BY THE JUNE 4 ELECTIONS, THEIR INTEREST IS NOT GENERATING A MASSIVE PUBLIC RESPONSE. SUFFERING FROM THE ECONOMIC CRISIS, STILL UNCLEAR AS TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY'S MEANING AND PERHAPS CONFUSED BY WITHDRAWALS AND THREATS OF BOYCOTTS, MANY VOTERS SEEM PRONE TO APATHY OR UNCERTAINTY. INFORMAL SOUNDINGS AND VARIOUS SAMPLINGS OF OPINION INDICATE

THE UNDECIDED VOTE REMAINS AT LEAST 40 PERCENT DESPITE
SUBSTANTIAL PARTY PROPAGANDA AND GOP PUBLICITY.

6. LEFTIST MARXIST PARTIES ARE CAMPAIGNING ACTIVELY
BUT INTERNAL QUARRELS AND MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS AMONG THESE
PARTIES ENJOY "EQUAL TIME" WITH ATTACKS ON "IMPERIALISM"
AND "FASCISM." UDP'S MAGAZINE "MARKA" DEVOTES PAGES TO
CRITICIZING THE MOSCOW-LINE COMMUNIST PCP AND ITS LABOR
CONFEDERATION CGTP (LIMA 3830).

7. THE PARTIDO SOCIALIST REVOLUCIONARIO (PSR), HEADED BY
LEONIDAS RODRIGUEZ FIGUEROA, STILL SEEMS TO BE SUFFERING
PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION. IN A MAY DAY SPEECH AT CUZCO, ONE
PSR CANDIDATE ADVISED VOTERS TO AVOID THE POLLS ON JUNE 4,
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WHILE PARTY LEADER RODRIGUEZ THE FOLLOWING DAY ARGUED ON TV
THAT THE POLITICAL PARTY GAINING THE MAJORITY OF VOTES SHOULD
FORM A CABINET AND ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESOLVING PERU'S
ECONOMIC CRISIS.

8. COMMENT: THE APRA WITHDRAWAL RUMOR NOT ONLY REFLECTS
PERU'S IMPERFECT AND "IMAGINATIVE" JOURNALISM, BUT ALSO THE
STREAM OF POLITICAL RUMORS FLOODING LIMA. ALTHOUGH THE
PCP STATEMENT AVOIDED ANY ALLUSION TO ITS WITHDRAWAL
FROM THE RACE, THE DECLARATION COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN REASSURING
TO THE GOP. THE PPC STATEMENT ENHANCING BEDOYA'S IMAGE AS THE
MILITARY'S SEVEREST IMPORTANT CRITIC WAS AIMED PRIMARILY
AT THE AP LEADERS DISCUSSING THE DISPOSITION OF
POPULIST VOTES IN THE JUNE 4 ELECTIONS. MORALES BERMUDEZ,
MEANWHILE, APPEARS TO BE STICKING DOGGEDLY TO HIS POLITICAL
PLAN, ALTHOUGH WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS MUCH MORE FLEXIBILITY
IN POST ELECTORAL TIMETABLE THAN MOLINA'S SPEECH WOULD IMPLY.

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